The Syriac Chronicle of Michael Rabo (The Great)
A Universal History from the Creation

Translation and Introduction by
Matti Moosa

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Dedicated to:

His Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch of the Eastern Part of the United States of America, for his most commendable effort in promoting and perpetuating the legacy of the Syrian Orthodox Church

And

In loving memory of my father Ishaq Moosa (d. 1960), deacon and malphono (teacher), who for decades served the Syrian Orthodox Church and the School of Mor Tuma (St. Thomas) in Mosul, Iraq

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In Memory of their parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, uncles and aunts. Elias and Jamila Johar Yunan Khbaiz Id Dayr, Rose, Yunan, Yacoub, Marcos and Mary who toiled to give their children the best available education.

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Translator's Introduction

Michael Rabo, patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church (1166-1199), was the most outstanding dignitary of his community in the twelfth century. He was and is known as Rabo, Syriac for "great," and is called this epithet by Bar Hebraeus.[2] William Wright says that he was called Michael the Elder to distinguish him from his nephew, Michael the Younger, who became (an ante) patriarch in Melitene in opposition to the lawful Patriarch John XIV, but gives no source for his statement.[3] *The Anonymous Edessan* discusses the conflict between this intruding Michael and the legitimate Patriarch Mor Athanasius, and calls him "Michael the Younger," which connotes not a social status but age.[4] Moreover, to the present time, Michael Rabo remains known as Michael the Great.

Michael Rabo was born in Melitene (Malatya, present-day Turkey) in 1126 to the priestly Qandasi family. His father Iliyya (Elijah) was a priest, and his uncle, Athanasius Zakka (d. 1166), was a metropolitan of Anazarba. He became a monk at the Monastery of Mor Barsoum near Melitene and then its archimandrite. He was strict in observing church canons and would not accept the office of the patriarchate offered to him unless the bishops pledged to adhere to them. He is renowned for his good character, sagacity, endurance and sound judgment, but mostly for his massive Syriac Chronicle, as shall be seen shortly.[5]

Like many ancient writings of prominent Syriac learned men, this Chronicle was hardly known for a long time in either East or West. Even the great Syriac scholar, the renowned Maronite Bishop Yusuf (Joseph) Assemani (1687-1768) had no full knowledge of it. He does not even list it among Michael's writings.[6] Michael Rabo may have started writing it in the year 1166 and ended it in 1196, three years before his death on November 7, 1199.

Armenian scholars should be credited for being first interested in this Chronicle. The German scholar Andrea Schmidt has so far provided the most comprehensive account of the Armenian translations of Michael's Chronicle including a text summary of versions I and II.[7] The reason is that the Armenians share with the Syrians the same doctrinal faith of the "One Nature of Christ," following the theological system of St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). In addition, the Chronicle contains several examples of the efforts of both the Syrian and the Armenian Orthodox Churches to achieve doctrinal union between them. Furthermore, the Chronicle abounds with Armenian historical and church events pertaining to their kingdom, kings, domination by the Arabs and Turks, and finally their relations with the Crusaders. It was probably for these reasons that a certain Vartaped, David, undertook the translation of the Chronicle into Armenian at the beginning of the thirteenth century. However, David died while working on the first part of the Chronicle. Thus, his translation is only partial and no date is given for it.

According to the French scholar Victor Langlois, a member of the Armenian Mekhitarist Academy of Saint Lazar of Venice, a second Armenian translation was made from the Syriac in 1248 by a priest named Ischok, who worked on the translation during the pontificate of the Armenian Catholicos Constantine I (Bardzrberdts'i, 1221-1267), and the pontificate of Mor Ignatius, patriarch of the Syrians.

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[2] See Bar Hebraeus, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, ed. by J. B. Abbeloos and Thomas Joseph Lamy (Paris and Louvain, 1874), 536.

[3] See William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London, 1894), 250.

[4] See *Tarikh al-Ruhawi al-Majhul*, translated by Rev. Albert Abouna, II (Baghdad, 1986), 378.

[5] See Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum *The Scattered Pearls*, translated by Matti Moosa (Gorgias Press, 2003) 446, and Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlischen arabischen Literatur* (City of Vatican: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1947), 267.

[6] See Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, Vol. 2, 154 ch. xxxi, and *Chronique de Michel le Grand, patriarche des Syriens Jacobites, traduit pour le première fois sur la version arménienne du prêtre Ischôk* par Victor Langlois (Venice, 1868), 2.

[7] See Andrea Schmidt, "Foreword to the Armenian Versions I and II" in *Text and Translations of the Chronicle of Michael the Great, The Armenian Epitomes*, Vol. 9 (Gorgias Press, 2011), vii-xxv, and by the same author," Die zweifache armenische Rezension der syrischen Chronik Michales des Grossen, " in *Le Museon* 109 (1996), 299-319.

Apparently, the Syriac copy of Michael's Chronicle was lent to him by the Syrian patriarch to work on it.[8] Langlois makes the statement that the Armenian version of Michael's Chronicle was translated into Latin by Professor M. Nazarian in Russia, but gives no information about this translation.[9] In 1848, Edouard Dulaurier translated parts of the Armenian version into French and it was published in the *Journal Asiatique* (1848) and in the *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades* (1869).[10]

However, Langlois disapproves of Dulaurier's translation and says it is inaccurate.[11] It was then left for Victor Langlois to translate and publish the entire Armenian epitome in 1868. This Armenian version was published in 1870 and 1871.[12] Presently, I am informed by my colleague Dr. Robert Bedrosian that he has completed a new translation of the Armenian abridgment into English.

But who was this Ischok? Langlois says that Ischok, who Armenians call Sahak (Isaac), was an Armenian priest who was attached to the Catholicos' (Constantine I) palace at Hrombla. He continues to say that because of the conflict between Patriarch Ignatius and his church, the patriarch sought refuge with the Armenian Catholicos Constantine I, taking his books with him. Among these was a copy of the Chronicle of Michael Rabo, which he lent to Ischok who undertook its translation. Apparently, Langlois derives his information about Patriarch Ignatius from Joseph Assemani's *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, II, 371-376, who derived his information from the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus.[13] Evidently Bar Hebraeus says nothing of this sort about Ignatius or the Chronicle of Michael.[14] According to the late Patriarch Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum (d. 1957), Ischok was the Syrian priest, Yeshu (Joshua) of Hisn Kipha, a resident of Qal'at al-Rum (the Roman fortress). In 1245, he made an abridgment of the Chronicle in Armenian and it was revised by the Armenian monk Vardan.[15] Evidently, Langlois must have misunderstood the name Isho, which is the Syriac colloquial of Yeshu, as Ischok.

Following Langlois' translation of the Armenian version, some writers objected that it was not a translation of the Syriac text but an adaptation. The German scholar Felix Haase undertook the task of comparing sections of the Armenian translation with the original Syriac. After comparing many sections of both, he reached the conclusion that the Armenian version of The Chronicle of Michael the Great is not a translation of the Syriac Chronicle by this historian, but an independent work of Armenian editors. He goes on to say that, Armenian editors omitted a large part of The Chronicle and abbreviated others. He further maintains that because of local patriotic interest, the Armenian editors added a number of events and legends of Armenian church history, which gave the Armenian edition a lasting value.[16]

According to Langlois, the original text of Michael's Chronicle seems to have been lost when the fortress of Hrombla (Roman fortress, Qal'at al-Rum in Arabic) was pillaged by the Egyptian Mamluks in 1298.[17] As far as we know, *The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex of the Chronicle of Michael the Great* is the only

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[8] See Langlois, 9-10.

[9] See Langlois, 8.

[10] See Land, J. P. N. *Joannes Bischof von Ephesos. Der erste syrische Kirchenhistoriker,* (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1856), 44-45.

[11] See previous note, 8; William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894), 252, and J. B. Chabot, in *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 43ème année, N.4,* Séance du 28 juillet 1899, p. 477.

[12] See previous note and Dorothea Weltecke, "The World Chronicle by Patriarch Michael the Great (1126-1199): Some Reflections," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. xi, no. 2 (1997), 8-9 and the above Armenian Preface translated by Robert Bedrosian.

[13] See Langlois, 10, notes 1-3.

[14] See *The Chronography of Gregory Abul' Faraj Bar Hebraeus*, translated into English by Ernest A. Wallis Budge (Oxford University Press, 1932), 389 where Ignatius is mentioned.

[15] See Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls*, translated by Matti Moosa (Gorgias Press, 2003), 446, and Mor Gregorius Yuhanna Ibrahim, Syrian Orthodox Bishop of Aleppo, in the Arabic translation of the Chronicle of Michael Rabo translated by Mor Gregorius Saliba Shamoun, in 3 Vols. Aleppo: Dar Mardin, 1996), p. 25 of the Introduction found in all the volumes. It is also found in the *Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex of the Chronicle of Michael the Great,* ed. by Bishop Yuhanna Ibrahim (Gorgias Press, 2009), p. xii of the Introduction.

[16] See Felix Haase, "Die armenische Rezension der syrischen Chronik Michaels des Grossen," *Oriens Christianus.* Neue Series V, 13 (1915), 69-82 and 271-283, especially the last page.

[17] Langlois, 10.

surviving copy of Michael's Chronicle. On page 298 of this *Codex*, we find the statement that this copy was transcribed by the monk Michael of 'Urbish (later a metropolitan), from the copy of Metropolitan Musa of Sawar (d. 1587), who transcribed his copy from the original text written by the Patriarch Michael Rabo. Michael of 'Urbish completed the copying of the *Codex* in the year 1598. This statement also appears in Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac script) on the upper-left corner of p. 781 of the *Codex*, but it is written by someone else. Unfortunately, there is no information about the fate of Michael's original copy. Whatever there is on the copy of Metropolitan Musa of Sawar remains rather nebulous.

The Edessa-Aleppo Codex of the Chronicle of Michael the Great found its way into the Syrian Church of Edessa (present-day Urfa in Turkey). How it got there, no one knows. What is known is that it was finally taken to Aleppo by the Syrian congregation, which was forcibly evicted in 1924 by the Turkish government, and deposited at the Church of St. Jirjis (George). It remained under lock until 2009, when the present Metropolitan Mor Gregorius Yuhanna Ibrahim of Aleppo decided to make it public. It was printed by Gorgias Press (2009).[18]

The Edessa-Aleppo Codex was not completely unknown to some Syrian bishops in the nineteenth century, who read all or some parts of it. On folio numbered six at the beginning of the *Codex*, we read the following in Garshuni:

> Bishop Timothy Ibrahim Qudsi, the less of the chief priests, looked through this book on the first of the month of November of the year 2138 of the Greeks/1827 A.D.

It is followed by:

> The less among the chief priests, Iyawannis Stephen Jazri, read through this book at the Festival of Sts. Peter and Paul in the month of June of the year 2158 of the Greeks/1847 A.D.

This is finally followed by:

> In the year 1849, I, the less among the chief priests Philoxenus Zaytun, metropolitan of the village of Beth Anhil in the district of Midyat, Tur Abdin, read through this book at the Church of Peter and Paul in Edessa, in the time of Metropolitan Timothy Ibrahim Qudsi in the year 2159 of the Greeks/1849 and the year 1265 of the Hijra/A.D. 1848-1849.

From the above we gather that these and probably other Syrian bishops knew about the existence of this Codex, but no one thought of, or even had the means of making it public. It should also be mentioned that a Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac script) translation was completed in 1795 by Yuhanna Shuqayr, Syrian Orthodox metropolitan of Damascus. Five Garshuni versions survive in different MSS, none of which are published.[19]

In the 1880's, the Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignatius Rahmani, then bishop of Edessa in 1887, acquired a copy of the *Codex* in Edessa and carried it with him to Rome. He presented it to the Italian orientalist Ignazio Guidi (d. 1935), perhaps in the hope of seeking funds to have it printed, but he did not succeed in this effort.[20]

In 1899, the Rev. J. B. Chabot published the first volume of his French translation of the *Syriac*

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[18] See the Preface of Metropolitan Yuhanna Ibrahim to the *Edessa-Aleppo Codex*, ix.

[19] See J. B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, I, XLIII-L; Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls*, 445, note 1 and Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur,* II (Vatican City, !947), 267.

[20] See Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie*, II, Leipzig: 1898, repr. New York: Burt Franklin, n.d. 432; J. B. Chabot, in *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 43ème année, N.4,* Séance du 28 juillet 1899, p. 477, and Dorothea Weltecke, "The World Chronicle by Patriarch Michael the Great (1126-1199): Some Reflections," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. xi, no. 2 (1997), 9.

Codex under the title *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche* (1166-1199), (Paris, 1899), reprinted Culture et Civilisation, Bruxelles, 1963. It was followed by Vol. 2 in 1901 and Vol. 3 in 1905. Finally, he had Vol. 4 of the Syriac text published in 1910. While the title of *The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex* and Chabot's copy from which it was made are missing, Chabot's copy bears the Syriac title *Kthobo d' Makhthabanuth Zabne d' Sim l' Mor Mikha'il Rabo, Fateriarchu* (The Chronicle written by Mor Michael Rabo the Patriarch). Evidently, the title is the interpolation of the calligrapher, whoever he is, and who transcribed Chabot's copy. Instead of following this title, Chabot's French title reads thus, "Michel Le Syrien Patriarche Jacobite." Why call Michael Rabo "Syrian" and "Jacobite?" I am not contesting these terms. What I am maintaining is that they are an arbitrary interpolation by Chabot. They are not in the Syriac copy where the title is missing. Furthermore, to designate Michael as "Syrian" is self-evident, even superfluous. Generally, Western scholars of Syriac culture call the fathers of the Syrian church either by their agnomen, like Bar Hebraeus, or according to their native place of birth, or mostly according to the cities where they served as bishops. For example, Jacob of Sarug is known after the town of Sarug. Philoxenus of Mabug is known after the city of Mabug, and Jacob of Edessa is known after the city of Edessa, Dionysius Tell Mahre is called after the town of Tell Mahre, Sergius of Rish 'Ayna, after the city of this name, etc. These and many other fathers are Syrians by language and culture. Like them, Michael Rabo was a genuine Syrian and patriarch of the Syrian Church. Why of all of them he is called "Syrian" by Chabot?

Calling Michael Rabo "Jacobite" is another matter. Chabot should have realized that the term "Jacobite" is neither doctrinal nor denominational. It was first used during the conflict between Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578) and his supporters, and Paul the Black, as attested by the historian John of Ephesus.[21] Later, from the end of the sixth century until now, it has been used by the Chalcedonians to berate the Syrian Orthodox Church and community. It has simply been used as a derogatory appellation to mean that Jacob Baradaeus was a "heretic" who established a separate church that rejected the Council of Chalcedon. By the same token, the anti-Chalcedonian Syrians called the Chalcedonians as Malkites, or those who espoused the ideas of Emperor Marcian, who was instrumental in the convocation of the Council of Chalcedon. Both terms "Jacobite" and "Malkite" are pejorative and have no theological legitimacy. In fact, history shows that Jacob Baradaeus neither established a new church nor developed a new dogma. By his indefatigable effort for forty years, he saved the church in Syria and Egypt from utter extinction as a result of the persecution of the Byzantine church and state. It is true that the term "Jacobite" recurs in Syriac writings, as the subtitle of the Syriac copy of Rev. Chabot shows. Sometimes, it is even mentioned in the Chronicle of Michael Rabo itself. However, the term is either used by Eastern calligraphers and others who are not well versed in the history of the Syrian Church, or used by the opponents of this church.[22] Or, it is used as a term which became current throughout time.

As to the term "Malkite," Emperor Marcian did not establish a new church called "Malkite," or Malkoye in Syriac. Thus, "Malkite," is as much a derogatory term as "Jacobite."

Be that as it may, Chabot's translation of the Chronicle is impressive. His Introduction is expansive, covering 52 pages. Among other things, he elaborated the Armenian and Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac script) MSS of Michael's Chronicle. Surprisingly, however, he does not say how he obtained a copy of the Syriac text deposited in the Syrian Church in Urfa (Edessa). According to the minutes of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, in its Session dated July 28, 1899, Chabot says that he was expecting Bishop Rahmani to publish the copy of Michael's Chronicle he had brought to Rome, but did not. Chabot goes on to say that he spent five years searching in the Middle East to find a copy of the Chronicle. Finally, in 1897, during a scientific mission in Syria, he says, "I managed to discover it (The Chronicle) in the humble library of the Jacobite church in Urfa, the ancient Edessa." He continues that "For no price, I could obtain a copy of it. I had, however, the possibility to examine the manuscript during one day; this was enough to let me

[21] See *The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex*, Book Ten, Chapter 13, 360; Chabot's copy, 357 and his French translation, 2, 324.

[22] See "al-Ya'qubiyya (Jacobitism)" being a summary of an article by deacon Ni'mat Allah Denno (d. 1951), showing the term "Jacobite" is derogatory and has no historical validity. See *al-Majalla al-Patriarchiyya*, 2, no. 11 (Damascus, September, 1963), 83-90.

realize its value, and also to increase my regrets."[23] He adds that, "Today, thanks to the clever negotiations lead by persons to whom I would be happy to publicly pay tribute here, if they had not required from me the categorical assurance not to tell their names, I possess a good copy made by a copyist who reproduced the original manuscript page by page and line by line, and whose calligraphic execution is close to excellent." Chabot ends up saying that the copy Bishop Rahmani possessed also came from the manuscript of Urfa, which seems really to have been an *unicum* (the same).[24]

Chabot's above statements are puzzling and sound surreptitious.[25] The years he spent searching for a copy of The Chronicle of Michael Rabo, until finally on a scientific mission to Syria he found it at a Syrian church in Urfa (Edessa) are not clear. How did he "discover" it while he knew that Bishop Rahmani had already brought a copy of it to Rome? And what was the nature of the scientific mission he iterates? How many men were involved in helping him obtain a copy of the Chronicle, and what was the reason they wanted him to keep their names concealed? Dorothea Weltecke, a German Syriac scholar, sheds some light on these statements. She says, "Sadly but understandably, Chabot's method of discovering manuscripts had a long lasting side-effect on the relationship between scholars of Oriental studies and Oriental scholars, the impact of which is still felt to this day." She continues, "In Europe, Chabot was honored for having 'discovered' the chronicle after a year-long research, while the Syriac original and the Arabic translations became known or were acquired for European libraries respectively. While none of these have been published, they have, however, been used by Chabot as a corroboration of the Syriac text in his translation and commentary."[26]

The late Syriac scholar, Arthur Vööbus (d. 1988), sheds some light on the manner Chabot obtained this manuscript. Vööbus, who was trying to photograph some Syriac manuscripts (in Aleppo) in the 1980's, says that Archbishop Dionysius (Jirjis) permitted him to photograph the documents he needed. However, the council of the church overruled his decision, creating a very painful situation. Vööbus continues to say that he was permitted to see the manuscripts, but the council members were sitting around him and followed every move he made. He concludes that, "These people had not yet forgotten their deep resentment caused by Prof. J.B. Chabot who had broken their trust in Edessa as I was told."[27] Nevertheless, the present Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo, Mor Gregorius Yuhanna Ibrahim, identified the calligrapher who made a copy for Chabot as deacon Gouria of Urhoi (Edessa) in the year 2199 of the Greeks/A.D. 1888.[28] In fact, the name of deacon Gouria appears in a colophon on p. 777 of the Syriac text of Chabot, following the table of names of the Nestorian Catholicoses. Although the colophon does not clearly state that Gouria is the one who added it, he is most likely the same deacon Gouria who transcribed the Syriac copy of Chabot in 1888. It should be noted that the *Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex* does not have this colophon.[29] Despite the abstruse or perhaps inconvenient circumstances under which Rev. Chabot obtained a copy of Michael's Chronicle, he is the first scholar in both East and West to undertake the translation into French of this massive work. His translation is truly a phenomenal feat that shall be remembered and cherished for generations to come.

The present translation of Michael's Chronicle, offered for the first time in English, is based on *The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex* and two Arabic translations. One is London MS Or. 4402 in Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac script), the other is a recent translation by Metropolitan Mor Gregorius Saliba Shamoun of Mosul in 3 Vols. under the title *Tarikh Mar Mikha'il al-Suryani al-Kabir al-Patriarch* (Dar Mardin, Aleppo, 1996). It is a translation of Rev. Chabot's copy. The London Garshuni MS contains the translation of

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[23] See Notes by J. B. Chabot in *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres.* Séance du 28 juillet 1899, 477-478.

[24] Notes by J. B. Chabot in *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres.* Séance du 28 juillet 1899, 478.

[25] See Roger Pearse, *Armenian Versions of Michael the Syrian,* found on the internet.

[26] Dorothea Weltecke, "The World Chronicle by Patriarch Michael the Great (1126-1199): Some Reflections," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, Vol. xi, no. 2 (1997), 10.

[27] See Weltecke, 10, note 22.

[28] See the Preface of Metropolitan Yuhanna Ibrahim to the *Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex* (Gorgias Press, 2009), p. xii 5 of the English version; p. 5 of the Syriac version, and p. k of the Arabic version of the same Preface at the beginning of the Codex.

[29] See *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, IV (Paris, 1910, rept. 1963), 777.

Yuhanna Shuqayr of Sadad, metropolitan of Damascus, completed in 1759. It is transcribed from the copy of the Za'faran Monastery by David, son of Ibrahim al-Solchi[30] in the time of Patriarch Elias (II 'Ankaz) on September 7, 1846. Then, he goes on to say that the Za'faran copy is written in three columns. One column contains profane history; the second contains church history and the third contains extraordinary natural phenomena. David al-Solchi did not follow this arrangement, but preferred to write down these columns following each other consecutively in order that the reader might not be tired or bored. Also, he followed this arrangement because in some parts the folios are blank either because they were not in the original Syriac text, or because the *Codex* is old and some of the folios were lost or placed in disorder.[31] Unlike this version which is translated into a mixture of colloquial and classical Arabic, the recent translation of Metropolitan Saliba Shamoun is done in classical Arabic. I have abstained from contextual criticism of these translations which I used only as far as they conformed to the Syriac text. Sometimes I consulted the Garshuni copy of Michael's Chronicle in MS 20 of St. Mark's Monastery, Jerusalem, and a DVD copy provided me by the antiquarian Roger Pearse, which can be found on the internet. It is copied by the priest Jirjis (George) of the family of Fadil of the village of Fairuza, Syria. Jirjis finished copying it on January 5, 1899 in the time of Patriarch Abd al-Masih (II), and Metropolitan Iyawannis (Halluli), archimandrite of St. Mark's Monastery.[32] Still, there are other Garshuni copies in Sadad, Cambridge and an abridged copy in the Borgia Museum, Rome.[33]

Michael used Greek and Syriac authorities mentioned in the three versions of the Introduction. In the computation of years of the Biblical fathers, he relied on the Chronicle of Eusebius of Caesarea. This Chronicle was translated by Jacob of Edessa (d. 708).[34] Unfortunately, it is lost to us except for few folios translated into Latin and published by E. W. Brooks in 1903.[35] In his account on the Crusades, he relied on his own experience and on an Arabic source, but does not identify it. He also used Armenian sources from which he derived the table of names of the Armenian Catholicoses. Again, he does not identify his source. Nevertheless, in order to compile his massive knowledge, he must have had a fairly good knowledge of Greek, Armenian and Arabic languages. At the end of Chapter Fourteen of Book Fifteen, Michael says that, "We placed this chapter at the end of this book because we have derived it from an Arabic book." And at the end of the table of Armenian kings and chief priests, he says, "We found this information in an Armenian book." These statements indicate that Michael knew Arabic and Armenian. However, he does not identify either of these books.

The *Chronicle* of Michael Rabo is not a random compilation of ancient sources. Michael makes clear in the Introduction, which survives in an Armenian abridgment, that he gathered numerous accounts from sacred and secular documents with the names of their authors. He did not copy these accounts slavishly but sifted through them and chose what only was most useful, leaving aside what was harmful, inaccurate or irrelevant. In this sense, Michael, like any historian of our time, adhered strictly to the accepted canons of history and the manner in which they should be presented. His objective was to run a trustworthy and accurate account of history from the Creation to his own time. Michael had a keen sense of history. Not only did he desire to leave a record of history to future generations, but also to enlighten the people of his own time. He realized that ancient authors had presented knowledge of their own time in a comprehensive manner. He also maintained that not too many people of his time made use of their writing. Thus, he undertook the task to present history in a contracted and concise manner to his generation, which was

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[30] Chabot mistakenly writes the name as al-Solibi in the Arabic version and es-Solibi in his French translation. See Chabot's Preface to *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, 1, p. xlv of the Arabic and xlvi of the French, and Notes by J. B. Chabot in *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*. Séance du 28 juillet 1899, 479.

[31] See MS London, Or 4402 the colophon of David al-Solchi, p. 420 being the last page of the MS, and G. Margoliouth, *Descriptive Lists of the Syriac and Karshuni manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since 1873* (London, 1899), 2.

[32] See the colophon written in Arabic and Syriac on p. 363 of MS 20 of St. Mark Monastery.

[33] See Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum, *The Scattered Pearls*, 446, notes 1 and 3.

[34] See the remarks of Theodosius of Edessa in Book Seven, Chapter Two.

[35] E. W. Brooks, "Chronicon Iacobi Edesseni" *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Vol. 4, 3rd series, 1903, 187-257.

blunted by ignorance. His intention was that by reviving the writings of authors of past generations, he would dispel the darkness of ignorance in his generation. Like any modern historian, Michael was essentially saying that by studying the past we learn the present. Judging by its extensive scope, historical narrative and wealthy source materials, the Chronicle of Michael Rabo is a work of impressive Syriac scholarship and erudition.

It should be remembered that Michael was a devout, Christian historian. Unlike modern historians who drop God's providence from their treatment of history, Michael maintains that God is in control of history and time. In his Introduction, he warns the inquiring minds not to be dismayed about the discrepancies between the Septuagint and other translations of the Scriptures because, "mankind errs in correctly understanding the word of the Lord, and that only the Creator and Lord can know time." Perhaps, like Eusebius, Michael had in the back of his mind Christ's warning to his disciples in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."[36] To him, the omniscient God is the Lord of history.

From Michael's Chronicle, we learn that the actions of men, especially rulers, whether believers or not, are monitored by God. Their good deeds merit God's approval, and bad deeds, God's wrath. In fact, his Chronicle abounds with examples of warfare, calamities, plagues, famines, earthquakes, and even swarms of locusts that devastated crops, as manifestations of God's wrath against men. In Chapter Six of Book Eleven of the Chronicle, he affirms that the Muslims invaded the district of Antioch and took a great number of men, women, and especially young women captive, as a divine punishment of the Christians.

It is interesting that in Book Eight, Chapter Four, Michael relates the story of the young men who fled the city of Ephesus from the persecution of the Roman Emperor Decius (249-251), and slept in a cave. When they woke up it was the time of Emperor Theodosius II (d. 450). They had slept for almost two hundred years. This Byzantine, Christian miracle was adapted by Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, as a revelation he received from God and used it as Sura (Chapter) 18 of the Quran entitled Ahl al-Kahf (The People of the Cave). The importance of this story is that it serves as evidence of how much Muhammad was influenced by Christian legends circulating in his time.

Apart from the narrative of the Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431), Michael devotes a rather extensive portion of Book Eight to the Council of Chalcedon (451). Apparently, this Council was convened by Emperor Marcian and his wife Pulcheria to present a new definition of the faith (much against the resolutions of the Council of First Ephesus in 431). In reality, its main objective was to punish Dioscorus, pope of Alexandria, for not reading the *Tome* of Leo, bishop of Rome, in the Second Council of Ephesus in 449. This Council (Chalcedon) tore the universal church into two conflicting factions, and its deleterious damage is felt until this day. As a leader of the church who rejected Chalcedon, it is not surprising to see Michael relate 72 narratives to demonstrate his condemnation of this council.

The rift between the Chalcedonians and their opponents continued, and was worsened when emperors sided with one faction against the other. In Book Nine, probably derived mainly from the second volume of the history of John of Ephesus (d. 587), which is lost to us, Michaels details this rift and the persecution suffered by the anti-Chalcedonians, calling them "Orthodox" and calling the Chalcedonians "heretics." Emperor Zeno, who came to power in 474, tried to find a compromise for both warring factions by issuing his *Henoticon* (Instrument of Union), but failed when some Egyptian bishops rejected it. Emperor Anastasius (491-518), who supported the anti-Chalcedonians, displeased the Chalcedonians. However, the scales tipped in favour of the Chalcedonians when Justin I assumed the throne. He was an avowed Chalcedonian and began the persecution of those who rejected the resolutions of the Council of Chalcedon. The main victim of his persecution was Patriarch Severus of Antioch (d. 538). Threatened by Justin to have his tongue cut off, Severus fled to Egypt where he administered his church by proxy until the end of his life. The persecution of the bishops and the pillaging of the monasteries and churches in the East intensified. The most notorious persecutor was Ephraim, Chalcedonian patriarch of Antioch, and his agent, Abraham

[36] Cf. *The Chronicle of George Synkellos*, translated by William Adler and Paul Tuffin (Oxford University Press, 2002), xxxv of the Introduction.

Bar Kaili, bishop of Amid. The persecution abated in the time of Emperor Justinian I (527-565), nephew of Justin, and his wife, Theodora, who was Orthodox, or non-Chalcedonian. However, the wounds afflicting the universal church were never healed. It is peculiar that amidst these tragic circumstances of the church, Justinian, a Chalcedonian, commissioned John of Ephesus, an anti-Chalcedonian, to evangelize heathens in Asia, Pharia, Phrygia and other countries. About 70,000 were converted to Christianity, but they accepted the Council of Chalcedon after Justinian paid the expenses of their baptism.[37] Justinian convened the Fifth Council as a compromise but it did not succeed, and he remained a Chalcedonian.

Adding to church schism was the constant warfare between the Roman (Michael never called the Romans as Byzantines) and the Persian Empires. Both invaded the territories of each other devastating, killing, burning, demolishing and taking captives. It is no wonder that both were exhausted by wars and other calamities like famine and plague, that they fell as easy prey for the Arabs, who invaded their territories, defeated them and became their new masters. In addition, we should not lose sight of the heroic and indomitable people of Armenia. The Romans had mistreated the Armenians and even dislodged crowds of them, scattering them throughout the Roman territory because of their rejection of the Council of Chalcedon. By weakening Armenia, they destroyed the bulwark that protected their territories against foreign invasion. The tragic blow came in 1071 when they lost the battle of Manzikert to the Seljuk Turks in northern Armenia, and the entire Asia Minor was open to the new invaders. Eventually, the eastern Roman homeland became what is called today Turkey.

From Chapter Twenty-One of Book Ten, that is, the beginning of the reign of Emperor Maurice (582-602), until the end of Book Twelve, Michael Rabo extracts a very large pericope from the history of Patriarch Dionysius Tell Mahre (d. 845). It covers the events from the time of Maurice to the year 843, two years before Tell Mahre's death. The original of this history is regrettably lost to us, but whatever Michael copied from it is of prime importance. What is significant is that Tell Mahre relates in Chapter Two of Book Eleven of this Chronicle the appearance of Muhammad and Islam, and how the Arabs overwhelmed both the Persians and the Romans. In Chapter Six, Tell Mahre says that from Damascus, Khalid ibn al-Walid marched with an army against Aleppo and Antioch and killed many people. He laments the fact that the invading Arabs caused so many calamities that they are difficult to recount. In Chapter Seven, he shows that the Muslims finally dominated Syria proper together with Palestine and Iraq. Their victory sealed the end of the rule of the Romans in Syria, whose Emperor Heraclius departed with sorrow. While he praises Umar Ibn al-Khattab (d. 644) for his apparent justice, based on Muslim sources, he says that Umar imposed a Jizya (poll tax) on the countries his armies occupied. In Chapter Eight, Tell Mahre iterates the atrocities committed by the Muslims when they invaded Roman countries. From him, we learn that the invading Arabs were only interested in levying the Jizya (poll tax) on the subdued people, and in killing and looting. Their treatment of captive women inside some churches was abominable.

Moreover, the church continued to suffer from schism over the Christological resolutions of Chalcedon and began to lose ground to Islam. Since Tell Mahre was a contemporary of Abbasid Caliphs from Harun al-Rashid to al-Mu'tasim and an eyewitness of most of the events in his time, his observations and comments are most credible. He says that the Muslim caliphs who did not understand Christianity dabbled in church affairs and even determined the appointment of patriarchs. Still, the main concern of the caliphs was to collect the Jizya (poll-tax) from the Christians. Even the most tolerant of the Christians, the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (d. 833), imposed the Jizya as a priority. Patriarch Tell Mahre, who was a friend of al-Ma'mun, asserts that al-Ma'mun loved the Christians and imposed a double tribute on any of them who deserted Christianity or converted to Islam. He adds that al-Ma'mun used to say, "As long as you (Christians) pay me the Jizya, everyone has the freedom to follow the religion he wishes." For this, many deserted the mosques and joined the churches.[38] Al-Ma'mun also took Patriarch Tell Mahre with him to Egypt to prevail on the Biyamaye Copts in Lower Egypt to desist from rebelling and become obedient to

[37] See Book Nine, Chapter Twenty-Four.
[38] See Book Twelve, Chapter Thirteen.

the caliph. When their women brought food to their rebellious men, the Muslims captured them and defiled them. With the mediation of the patriarch, they stopped rebelling, but their leaders were evicted from Egypt and sold in Damascus. Al-Ma'mun issued a decree to his governors not to molest the Egyptians or kill them. He also lightened their Jizya. However, no sooner had he left Egypt than his governors oppressed the Egyptians even more. They killed many of them and took the rest captive.[39] It should be understood that to an extent al-Ma'mun was an exception and not the norm. However, one is tempted to note that this was the true spirit of the Abbasid society and not the fanciful world of the *Arabian Nights*. With the death of al-Mu'tasim (d. 842), the history of Tell Mahre comes to an end.

Most of the information in Book Thirteen is derived from the chronicle of Bishop Ignatius of Melitene (d. 1094).[40] In the introduction of his chronicle, which Michael Rabo presents at the beginning of Book Thirteen, Ignatius relates the reason for writing his chronicle. He says that after Dionysius Tell Mahre, no Syrian attempted to write the chronicle of kings and churches. So, he, the unworthy, decided to undertake this task by presenting the historical events in a simple and brief manner. He began his account with the time of Constantine the Great and brought it to his own time.

The conflict between the Romans and the Muslims, and the continuous persecution of his own church by the Chalcedonians aside, Ignatius makes a significant statement concerning the Armenians. He says that in the year 1300 of the Greeks/A.D. 989, the Armenians began to leave Great Armenia (in the time of Emperor Basil II, the Bulgar-Slayer (976-1025) and settle in Cappadocia, Cilicia and Syria.[41] This movement, together with the eviction of the Armenians from their country by some emperors, explains the existence of the Armenians in some Middle Eastern countries and the change of their demographic structure to this day. If the emperors had not weakened Armenia, the Seljuk Turks would have faced a great difficulty in overwhelming that country and the rest of Asia Minor.

In Book Fourteen, Michael Rabo details the origin of the Turks, who he says are the descendants of Japheth, one of the sons of Noah. They were also said to be the Gog and Magog by the Prophet Ezekiel in Chapters 38-39. They multiplied and spread in the earth. They controlled Persia, Athor (north Iraq), Beth Nahrin (Mesopotamia), Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Cilicia. In addition, they were used as mercenaries by the Arabs (by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mu'tasim, d. 842). When the Arabs became weak, the Turks dominated them and their caliphs were mere puppets, enthroned and deposed by their will. Like the Arabs, they embraced Islam and observed their religious rules and obligations.

In Book Fifteen, Chapter Three, Michael, who most likely continues the chronicle of Ignatius of Melitene, relates the rise of Tughrul Beg (1038-1063), the Seljuk, in Khurasan and his raids against Roman cities like Melitene and Aleppo, ravaging them. The catastrophe, however, came in 1071 when another Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan, nephew of Tughrul, defeated the army of the Romans at Manzikert in northern Armenia near Lake Van. With its defeat, the whole Roman territory was open to the Turkish hordes that moved quickly to occupy it and establish Turkish petty states. Of these were the Seljuks of Rum in Iconium and the Danishmends in Sebastea, Caesarea, Amasea and other northern regions. Other major cities like Antioch were in the hands of the Turks. Indeed, the Roman state was no more and the Romans were confined only to Constantinople and its surroundings.[42]

In Book Fifteen, Chapter Seven, we find the account of the regular army of the Crusaders and its leaders who arrived in Constantinople and then crossed over to the land of the Romans. The reason for their coming to the East was to liberate Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslim Turks. These Turks were molesting, persecuting and imposing heavy taxes on the European pilgrims to the Holy Places in Jerusalem. In addition, the Turks assassinated especially the pilgrims from Rome and Italy. This abominable treatment of the pilgrims moved the kings of Europe to send an army against these Turks. In 1097, the Crusaders

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[39] For the tragic conditions of these Egyptians, see Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen of Book Twelve.

[40] For a biography of Ignatius of Melitene, see Ignatius Aphram I Barsoum, translated by Matti Moosa as *The Scattered Pearls*, 418-419.

[41] Chapter Five of Book Thirteen.

[42] For details, see Matti Moosa, *The Crusades: Conflict between Christendom and Islam*, 67-75.

captured Edessa, which became the first Latin principality in the East. In the next year (1098), they captured Antioch, which was ruled by Aghousin the Turk.[43] Then, the Crusaders marched against Jerusalem, captured it in 1099, and set up their Latin Kingdom.

Before the Crusaders' arrival in the East, the condition of the countries of the Middle East was neither peaceful nor tranquil. In Chapter Seven, Michael shows that the warfare between the Muslim rulers, whether Turks or Arabs, was ferocious and devastating. The entire region was in constant turmoil. The Turks had the upper hand in Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia while the caliphate of Baghdad had totally lost its power. When the Crusaders arrived, they did not fight the Arabs but the Turks. The Franks were now the rulers of the East.[44]

As rulers, the Franks did not enjoy a state of peace. They faced two major and deadly enemies, first the Zangids and later their lieutenant mukluk, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Saladin). In 1144, Imad al-Din Zangi captured Edessa and his fighting men ravaged it. In Book Sixteen, Chapter Two, Michael laments the tragedy that befell Edessa. However, Imad al-Din Zangi's rule did not last long, and he was killed in bed by two of his eunuchs in 1146. His son Nur al-Din, who succeeded him, marched against Edessa, captured it and devastated it in this same year. This precipitated the second Crusade and the expedition to the East by Kings Conrad III of Germany and Louis II of France, which ended in failure. In 1174, Nur al-Din died and his lieutenant in Egypt, Saladin, took advantage of his death, married his widow, and by different maneuvers became the sole ruler of his domain. The Franks now faced this formidable enemy who unified the Muslim forces and defeated them at Hittin. He recaptured Jerusalem from them in 1187. The most significant reason for their defeat was their internecine conflict, divisiveness and the ill-fated tactical mistakes of their leaders.

Michael Rabo, who ends the saga of the Crusades with the death of Saladin in 1193, shows intermittently that, in general, the Franks did not treat their own people, the Syrians or the Armenians fairly. They used the Armenians for their own interests, and interfered in the affairs of the Syrian Church. Still, he is benevolent and objective in his treatment of Franks. At one time, he was invited by the Franks to journey to Rome to defend the true faith against a certain heresy. He did not journey to Rome, but wrote a discourse refuting that heresy and sent it to the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem. Although he was a contemporary of Saladin, yet he does not say much about him. Only on one occasion did he send a delegation to Saladin regarding a matter concerning the church, the nature of which he does not clearly explain. However, he was relieved when Saladin solved the matter in favor of the church. I have detailed the affairs of the Armenians and the Syrians before and after the arrival of the Franks in the East, and how they were treated by the Muslims, whether Arabs or Turks, and how they were treated by the Franks until the death of Saladin.[45]

It should be noticed that the pages of the *Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex* are not uniform. Some of them are one full page, others contain two columns, and others contain three columns. However, the entire *Codex* is written in a neat, modern Syriac hand. Unfortunately, the *Codex* suffers many lacunae, whether great or small. I preferred to fill in some of them from the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus, whereas Rev. J. B. Chabot filled all of them in his French translation of Michael's Chronicle. When these lacunae consisted only of a few words, I have overlooked them and bridged the text without losing the original meaning.

I have also eliminated the charts of dates and names of the kings of different ancient nations, whether they are recorded in individual charts or placed at the bottom of the folios. My main concern is to give a faithful translation of the entire text and not encumber the reader with the infinite names and dates which are mentioned in abundance in the text.

The first 90 folios of the *Syriac Codex* contain "marginal notes." Most of these notes, however, are originally meant either as a part of the text or have a strong affinity with it. For their importance, and that they might not be overlooked by the reader if they are treated otherwise, I have inserted them in their

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[43] For more details, see Matti Moosa, *The Crusades*, Chapters 9 and 10, pp. 269-380.

[44] See Matti Moosa, *The Crusades*, entire Chapter 14, pp. 477-532.

[45] See Matti Moosa, *The Crusades,* Chapters 14 and 18-19.

proper place in the text.

Throughout the entire Chronicle, the reader will be faced by the term "Orthodox." What Michael Rabo means by this term is specifically the Syrians, Armenians and the Egyptian (Copts) who rejected the definition of faith by the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.). The reader will also encounter the *Tome* of Leo, bishop of Rome, which separated the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, after their union. This was understood to mean that the divine nature of Christ acted separately from his human nature, with the result that there were two Christs, one divine and the other human, separate from each other. This *Tome*, which became the basis of the definition of faith by the Council of Chalcedon, was rejected by Michael Rabo and his church.

The dates in the *Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex* are given according to the computation of the Greeks, which exceeds the current calendar by 311 years. To eliminate confusion, I have converted the dates to our A.D. calendar. The discerning reader will find that some of the dates do not exactly correspond with the years, especially of kings, given by modern writers. I kept them as they were put down by the author.

The Biblical quotations are mostly taken from the New International Version and some others from the King James Version.

The reader will notice that Michael Rabo always refers to the East Roman Empire as "the Romans" or "the Greeks" and never used "Byzantine," which is a later term. He also refers to the Arabs as Tayoye in reference to the Arab tribe of Tay, which was evangelized and converted to Christianity by the Syrians. The term Tayoye covers Arabs and Arab Muslims. Even the Hijra or, Islamic Calendar, is referred to as Tayoye. Sometimes the Arab Muslims are called *hanfe,* which basically means pagans, or heathens. But in Michael Rabo's sense, and the sense of the Syrians, it meant non-Christians. He also refers to Arab Muslims as *mhagroye* (Hagerites) in reference to Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl who gave birth to Ishmael, son of Abraham, according to Genesis 16:11-16. However, from Book Fourteen onward, the Arabs and Muslims are sometimes called *Tayoye* and other times, *Arboye* (Arabs) or *Mshalmone* (Muslims), but no explanation is given.

This book would have not been completed without the collaboration of friends and colleagues. Some of them contributed translation of passages from the Armenian or the French. Others provided DVDs of unpublished Syriac manuscripts. Still, others offered their suggestions on parts of the translation. I am grateful to his Eminence Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church of the Eastern United States, for his commendable effort in having this book published, and for explaining some obscure Syriac terms. I am indebted to my colleague Dr. Robert Bedrosian, who translated the Preface found only in the Armenian epitome of the *Chronicle of Michael the Great*, and for his invaluable suggestions. I am also indebted to my kinsman Dr. Sami-Victor Qass Elias and his wife Dr. Elisabeth Kauffmann, to my friend and linguist Lance Strasser, to Robert Hall, a former student, and to Rev. Roger Youssef Akhrass, a promising young Syrian scholar, and Shatha Sofia for the translation of several passages of the French of J. B. Chabot. Ralph Boyles of the Computer Department of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania was very helpful in setting the draft copy of this translation on the computer. The antiquarian Roger Pearse, and Abd al-Masih Sa'di, have generously provided me with Garshuni and Arabic manuscript on CDs. I should also thank Dr. George Kiraz of Gorgias Press for providing me with a copy of the *Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex of Michael the Great.* I should also recognize the moral support of Dr. Admer Gouryh and Hanna Isa Tuma of the American Foundation for Syriac Studies. Petra Beck, who copy edited this book deserves my utmost thanks and gratitude.

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INTRODUCTION

Author's Preface

Listen now, you students and lovers of God, who seek knowledge about events and chronology. With great diligence, we have gathered numerous accounts from sacred and secular documents and have selected, for your sake as well as ours, from them only the most useful and rational information, leaving aside what is poisonous, inaccurate, and irrelevant. For (the early authors) wrote, as it were, in the dawn and noontime and, given the philosophy of those times, in an expansive, comprehensive manner.

It is our misfortune, on the other hand, to live in a period when the day is on the wane, and so (we write) in an abbreviated, contracted fashion. Seeing our (era as) blunted by ignorance, we wanted to dispel the darkness of that ignorance with the breath of (the Holy) Spirit. (Thus) we have resolved to pass the rays of the Sun of Justice like a torch to (illuminate) our hearts, and to present this book to Zion, our holy mother, to serve as education to her children who will hear about forgiveness from On High. Give us your prayers, then, so that our labors bear fruit. It is appropriate now to provide you with the names of the historians from whose works we have constructed this (*Chronicle*).

(The period) from (Adam), the root of humankind, until the coming of Christ was described by the Jewish (authors) (Julius) Africanus, Jesus, Hegesippus, and Josephus. Annianus the cleric from Alexandria, wrote (about the period) from Adam to the Emperor (king) Constantine. Eusebius Pamphili, compiled a book from these and other historians, (and wrote a book) called *Ecclesiastical History*. Zosimus, Sokrat (Socrates Scholasticus), and Theodoret the Heretic, wrote (about the period) from Constantine to Theodosius[46] the Lesser. John of Antioch,[47] Djebel, the lector Theodorus of Constantinople, and Zachariah, bishop of Mitylene, wrote (about the period) from Theodosius to Justinian the Old. John of Asia wrote (about the period) from Emperor Anastasius to Emperor Maurice. Gouria (Koria) the savant wrote (about the period) from Justinian to Emperor Heraclius and the march of the Arabs into Syria in Heraclius' time. The blessed James (Jacob) of Edessa briefly wrote about these matters. The deacon Dionysius wrote (about the period) from Maurice to Theophilus, emperor of the Greeks, and to Harun (Aaron), caliph (Amir) of the Arabs. Bishop Ignatius of Melitene and the presbyter Saliba from the same city, John of Kesum, and Dionysius of Alexandria, wrote short histories (about the period) from Adam until their own times. Putting forth the same effort (as these authors), we too, with the aid of God and to the glory of God, will weave a work whose fabric is made up of strands drawn from these and other (writers), colored with the vibrant hues of splendid flowers. Inquiring minds should not be dismayed by seeming discrepancies in the dating, for we found many such discrepancies between the Septuagint and other translations of Scripture, especially in the translation, which King Abgar had made at the order of Thaddeus the Apostle. This translation), was corrected by James of Edessa, who went among the Jews because of a suspicion that they had not provided accurate (exemplars) of all their writings, out of loathing for the heathens. There should be no surprise in this. For, indeed, it is the word of the Lord that mankind errs in understanding correctly times and seasons, and that only the Creator and Lord can know time. Let us, remaining firm in our faith, begin examining the literature with Adam, the first man. Moreover, we observe here, right at the outset, some discrepancy in the chronology (provided by different historians.[48]

Another version of the author's Preface

Devoted and studious brothers, when I was considering the facts, which are important to know in the great number of Chronicles, I refrained from going into detail about those that can be learned from the great number of existing accounts. In addition, I have compiled in the process, from ecclesiastical and profane writers, what was useful and appropriate to reveal in this way the mortal laziness of many, and to

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[46] II

[47] Or Alexandria.

[48] This preface is translated by Dr. Robert Bedrosian from the Classical Armenian Jerusalem 1870 edition, pp. 1-5, but it also appears in the Jerusalem edition of 1871. I have only changed the name of Zachariah of the Melitene into Mytilene.

enlighten the shadows of ignorance, lifting the sight towards the reward of my efforts. I shall leave this treasure in the church, and of the teachers of the children of the new Zion, so that it will survive after my time.

In first place we must place the first of all mankind, Adam, so that we start at the beginning. This will be useful to those who speak and those who listen. First, we must give the names of the historians from whom we propose to take the material of our edifice.

Africanus (Julius), Jesus, Hegesippus, Jews covered up to the coming of Christ, Annianus, a monk of Alexandria, covered from Adam until the emperor Constantine

Eusebius Pamphili composed his book with the help of their writings and called it *Church History.*

Zosimus, Socrates and Theodore the heretic, began their writings with Constantine and (continued) to Theodosius the Younger.

John of Antioch and of Dejebel, Theodore Lector, of Constantinople, and Zacharias, bishop of Mitylene, covered from Theodosius to Justinian the Elder.

John of Asia covered from Anastasius to Maurice.

Gouria covered from Justinian to Heraclius, and on the invasion of the Arabs into the lands of the Syrians, which took place in the time of Heraclius.

Saint James (Jacob) of Edessa made an abridgement of them all.

Dionysius the Patriarch covered from Maurice to Theophilus, emperor of the Greeks, and Haroun, amir of the Arabs.

Ignatius, bishop of Melitene, John of Kesum and Dionysius (of Alexandria), and Bar Salibi, made several chronicles from Adam to their own times.

Now we have enumerated the chronicles who, considering the studious disposition of listeners in their own times, wrote with rich colors, we who live in a lesser age, seeing our indolence, (will write) briefly passing rapidly over each of their accounts.

But studious men should not consume their energies in working out greater or lesser numbers in the computation of dates, because of the truth of the saying of the Savior, "The Father has kept for himself the knowledge of times and dates." In fact, there seems a great deal of difference between the version of the Septuagint, and that which the Syrians possess, that which King Abgar had translated, and which James of Edessa revised by using the artifice of a pretended conversion to Judaism, so that the Jews wouldn't hide their information from him.[49]

The Garshuni (Arabic in Syriac script) Preface of the Chronicle of Michael Rabo

Lord, Lord, unto my Lord I call as I proceed to copy the *Chronicle* written and set in order by Mor Michael Rabo (the Great), patriarch of the Syrians, who gathered it and derived it from the books of Maribas the Chaldean, Socrates, Theodoret, John, bishop of Asia, Timothy, bishop of Alexandria, Dionysius of Tell Mahre, Jacob of Edessa, Bar Salibi, Epiphanius, Iyawannis and other renowned teachers and fathers, each one of whom recorded the events of his own time and country.[50]

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[49] This verison of the Preface is translated by the antiquarian Roger Pearse from the French translation by Victor Langlois made from the Armenian translation of the presbyter Ishok, (Vince, 1868). Langlois's translation appears under the title *Chronique de Michel le Grand, Patriarche des Syrien Jacobites, traduite pour la premier fois sur la version Armenienne du pretre Ischok* par Victor Langlois (Mekhitarist Publishing House: Paris, 1868). I have produced it here with one slight change of Zacharias, bishop not of Melitene but of Mitylene. It could be found on the internet under http://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/

[50] This preface appears at the beginning of the Garshuni (Arabic written in Syriac script), of the British Museum, MS Arabic 4402), translated by Yuhanon (John) Shuqayr, metropolitan of Damascus who completed it in 1759. It is most likely written by Metropolitan Mikha'il (Michael) of Urbish when he was still a monk, and finished the transcription of the *Chronicle* of Michael Rabo in 1598 A.D.

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